

Charity Alive



Joyful Witness





Catholic Day of Action

by Sister Mary Beth Moore

I first heard of the Catholic Day of Action from the daily email messages sent by our Congregation to all members. Sister Joan O’Keefe, our Congregational Leader, presented a link simply saying, “Some sisters may be interested in this.” “This” was the invitation of the Leadership Conference of Woman Religious (LCWR) to participate in the Washington, DC action on behalf of Immigrant Children on July 18, 2019.

We were given an option of participating in an act of civil disobedience, occupying the Russell Senate Office Building and refusing to leave. Many times before I had accompanied dear friends from Pax Christi (the Catholic peace movement) when they were arrested, but I had never crossed that line myself. But this time, I asked myself, “Why wouldn’t I do this?” There was no answer. I checked the “Yes” box.

On a hot morning one week later I was with my Pax Christi friend and Washington host, Ronnie Fellerath, holding our banner on the tree-shaded lawn across from the building we would occupy. About 200 participants circled the bank of microphones and some dozen Catholic leaders spoke. Among them were Sister Carol Zinn, Executive Director of LCWR; Sister Simone Campbell, Executive Director of Network, the Catholic Social Justice Lobby; Father Joe Nagle, long time Franciscan peace activist; Sister Ann Scholz, LCWR Associate Director of Social Mission; and Eli McCarthy, main organizer of the Action and Justice and Peace Coordinator for the Conference of Major Superiors Of Men (CMSM). All spoke compellingly of the evil of detaining children in sub-human conditions and the imperative to end detention and send children to safe spaces immediately. Each one also emphasized the necessity of addressing the root causes of the crisis on the border. A young Salvadoran mom spoke in Spanish of her fear of deportation and possible separation from her little girl. She held the lovely toddler on her hip as she spoke.

Every aspect of the Day of Action was well-planned and punctual. At 11:00 am on the button we walked the short blocks to the Russell Senate Office Building. We who had committed to civil disobedience were identified by a yellow wristband and knew to hold back until the last. In the building's rotunda, participants formed a circle and those to be arrested formed an inner concentric circle. Five volunteers came to the very center and lay prone in the form of a cross. Ten or 12 police officers milled about. They had been well informed of the action to come, and waited to play their part.

The Senate Rotunda is a splendid piece of architecture. Its white marble walls, floor and ceiling are perfectly round. A balcony above, supported by carved pillars, affords a view of the whole. Sight lines are perfect; nowhere is anything obscured or hidden. As participants waited briefly, a hum of conversation echoed through the space. Then our Action leader, Eli McCarthy, called the group to attention. There were call-response chants, including the names of several children who have died in US custody. These names corresponded to the poster-sized pictures of the children hanging from the necks of participants. A priest moved into the circle to invoke our creator God, "We summon your spirit today to bless our brothers and sisters who..." He was interrupted by the bullhorn's siren and the summons of a DC police woman stating that our presence was illegal, and that we must withdraw or be arrested. The inner circle responded in unison, "We respectfully refuse to co-operate." The warning was repeated in short intervals twice more. Throughout this time, we recited the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary. At the announcement of each mystery, a quote from a detained child's testimony was read—sorrowful mysteries indeed. By the third warning, the outer circle of supporters had withdrawn. Then the police methodically worked through the

remaining circle of protesters. They handcuffed us in groups of 10 as we were led out of the building. We started our own songs then, "They'll Know We Are Christian By Our Love," and "One Bread, One Body." All of us knew the words by heart. The five protesters splayed on the floor in the form of a cross were among the last to leave. By then, the rotunda was quiet.

The action in the rotunda lasted about an hour, and we prayed the whole time. It seemed to me that action itself—Action for Immigrant Children—allowed the mind to rest, and the capacity to be fully present in the moment took hold. I sensed a deep solidarity, peace and joy pervading the rotunda.

The next three hours were far less dramatic, but still an important part of the civil disobedience. On the street, now handcuffed, we had our pockets emptied for us—a photo ID and the \$50 dollars we had been instructed to bring to pay the fine for release. We got the money and passport back. It was even hotter out now, but the police, themselves dripping sweat, allowed us to stand



From americamagazine.org—Catholic leaders and advocates lay on the floor in the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington July 18, 2019, to protest the Trump administration's handling of detained immigrant children. (CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn)

in the shade. Each of us was photographed as we were led to the (air-conditioned) bus. The police station was a few blocks away and we were led in, searched, and offered a plastic bag for our ID and money. We sat in rows of chairs in a huge (not air-conditioned) garage. Across the room, five police officers sat at a table as detainees were called forth to be processed. The police officers read us our rights. We waived the right to an attorney; agreed to pay a \$50 fine; signed off on the agreement. After this, we were escorted back to our seats and waited to be called again. In varying intervals, we were brought one by one and presented to another police officer, who unlocked the handcuffs, fingerprinted us, received our \$50 and returned our belongings. Then we were free. Each went out the door unaccompanied, waving good-bye to those still waiting and receiving a shout of good-bye and good luck.

I won't say those three hours passed swiftly, but it was not unpleasant either. I think I would have enjoyed talking with any of my fellow resisters. The ones I landed up with were great: a young Dominican sister just two years professed. A

committed laywoman, just two years married, who wasn't sure if this was her fifth or sixth arrest for civil disobedience. A Good Shepherd Sister with a doctorate in sociology, who now served retired sisters as the only driver in the house. A Sister from Long Island who was the justice and peace coordinator for her congregation. The five of us made up an intergenerational, interracial group. We talked about commitment, justice, choices, ministries, faith, spirituality, church. Surely 70 unique stories circulated in the unrelenting heat. No one complained. The garage was as humble as the rotunda was grand. The mood, less solemn of course.

This was my experience, a privileged experience. It is a bold thing to say, but I will say it. The action in the rotunda was a liturgy, a religious rite, with all the hallmarks of Eucharist. As Eucharist uses bread to symbolize the Body of Christ, we simply had our own bodies, given over in love in imitation of Jesus. The Action was Catholic, diverse, inclusive, led by laity. Participants were followers of Jesus who confront a world of injustice. In this moment of history the injustice includes detaining children, harming children, even allowing children to die. Our going forth in peace carries the commitment to the ongoing work to reverse this terrible situation.



On July 12, Sisters Kathleen Carven, Kay Conroy and Katherine McGrath participated in Boston's Lights For Liberty prayerful, spirited protest calling for a closing of the border camps. May our prayers and protests bring about a more dignified way of 'welcoming the stranger'!

Sisters Kay and Katherine plan to be "Charity on the Border" from September 27 until October 12 in El Paso, TX.



Sisters in Solidarity

Sister Elizabeth Bickan

"Sisters Susan Dean, Maureen Murphy, Frances Gritte and I, along with former member Suzanne Abruzzo, to whom the photos are credited, met with a group of about 75 people for a demonstration and vigil at the office of Congressman Tom Suozzi in Little Neck, NY. Mr. Suozzi has long been outspoken in defense of the rights of immigrants seeking refuge in the United States.

As dusk spread over the area, members of the group were given candles to light. The action was reminiscent of the lighting of candles at the Easter Vigil, spreading the light of Christ throughout the church and the world. We were proud to be a part of this small action on behalf of those who are seeking the freedoms which have been given to most of us by birth, and we were proud to gather as Sisters of Charity to make our voices heard and our light shine."

200 participants there. We walked around the local streets wearing the mylar blankets that people are wearing in the cages. The mylar blankets provided a graphic image to the onlookers on the streets.

One of the demonstration leaders told of her experience at the border of using permanent marker Sharpie pens to mark the skin on the backs of infants and young children with identification and contact information so that they could be reunited with their parents and family members."

Sister Mary Louise Brink

"The same night that Sisters Betty and Margaret were in Patchogue, July 19, 2019, I went to the Huntington Town Commons to participate with about 200 people in a candlelight vigil in support of immigrants.

The next evening, July 20, I was part of a demonstration with Sisters Virginia Blend, Roberta Kerins, Pat Wilson and about 200 other people on the grounds of the Sisters of St. Dominic Motherhouse in Amityville, NY. This hour long event was set in the context of a prayer service with singing and various readings. I met Virginia, Roberta and Pat by chance. It was good to be able to participate together."

Sisters Margaret Bickan and Betty Toohig

"We participated in a rally in Patchogue at Representative Lee Zeldin's office. There were about



Caritas Residence

Sister Evangeline Thompson and Mary Flynn enjoying the views from the Orchard on the grounds of Caritas Residence.

Maureen MacIssac, Associate and Sister Maria Sutherland (pictured above) enjoyed the Strawberry Social organized by the Victoria Hall Society at Caritas Residence in early July. Members of the Society Board prepared fresh strawberries with ice cream for those living and working at the Residence.

At Caritas Residence, Sister Nuala Kenny presented *Medical Decision Making in Aging and End of Life Care* based on her years of experience and research in bioethics. Sister Nuala reflected on the Christian tradition of a good death and its meaning in modern society. She reviewed both modern bioethics and Catholic moral teaching regarding medical decisions with particular attention to consent and refusal, pain control and nutrition and hydration at end of life.

In the second part of her presentation, Sister Nuala addressed advocacy for palliative care; explored advance care planning as a spiritual activity and clarified the role of those to whom we give health care proxy. She concluded with the challenge to be agents of care and compassion to all the sick and suffering in our communities.



Sister Nuala Kenny



To beat the summer heat Heather Sinclair (left), Assistant Coordinator at Caritas Residence, delivered popsicle treats to Sisters, residents and staff members. Popsicles bring a lot of joy on hot days!



Retirement Gift

by Sister Nancy Brown

Soon after my retirement from Covenant House in Vancouver this past fall, I journeyed to San Diego with several social justice advocates to a conference on anti-human trafficking sponsored by Shared Hope. Throughout the days, we were introduced to many survivor/leaders and heard some wonderful, inspiring presentations on a variety of topics. It was very impressive to witness the healing and passion of so many survivors.

To my surprise, one of the speakers' name seemed very familiar. While working at Covenant House Vancouver, I had contact with hundreds, if not thousands of youth but this name got my attention. All of a sudden, a flood of memories came to me. Many years ago, Covenant House had received a letter from a young woman, named Jessa who was thanking us for the support we had given her during her experience of being trafficked in and out of Vancouver. She appreciated the care and concern of Covenant House Vancouver, yet the staff was unaware at the time of her victimization. She also shared with us the wonderful news that she had exited, was in the process of healing, had located in Colorado, was married to a wonderful man and was studying for her master's degree in psychology.

It was such a pleasure and pleasant surprise to be able to attend the workshop that she presented! Permit me to briefly share with you her story as it really highlights some of the hidden and unknown aspects of human trafficking/pornography/prostitution. From 10 to 21 years of age, Jessa was a victim of familiar exploitation in Toronto where her family sexually abused her, forcefully used her for pornography, and sold her into prostitution and trafficked her to other countries. While Jessa was being sold for sex in Kansas, there was a woman who recognized the signs of human trafficking and slipped her contact information. After many months, Jessa followed up and was able to escape the trauma of her family by flying to Colorado where this woman runs a safe house. Finally, Jessa was free and able to start her journey to wholeness. As she so correctly says, she had to develop a new self-identity and not to let her past define her.

Unfortunately, Jessa's visa ran out and she had to return to Canada. This time she came to Vancouver. Everything was going well until she met another woman who befriended her. Being vulnerable and in a strange city during the 2010 Winter Olympics, Jessa, after a few days of being cared for by this woman, was



Jessa and her husband John cofounded BridgeHope to fight human trafficking locally, domestically, and internationally by collaborating resources for survivors of sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

invited to her apartment and was gang raped. This second trafficking experience caused Jessa to further lose trust in humanity. Once again, she was able to escape, headed back to Colorado to continue her healing process – refusing to let her past define her.

All through her childhood, Jessa was not permitted to go to school. The Colorado safe house suggested that she apply for a student visa and get her GED, telling her that if you can read, you can learn which Jessa quickly tattooed on her arm. Today, she is studying to get her PhD in counselling psychology in order to help other victims of human trafficking. During this time, she has found God as well as a loving husband. Together they have founded [BridgeHope](#) which is an agency focused on public education and service to survivors.

What a wonderful meeting I had with this brave, intelligent woman who has redefined her life and is dedicating herself to help others to redefine their lives. This story is my retirement gift!





What are Associates?

Staten Island Associates with Sister Grazynia Michniewicz

by Carol Evans, Associate Coordinator

Or rather WHO are the Associates? We are a diverse collection of women and men who have recognized within ourselves some affinity with the Sisters of Charity - Halifax. Their work, their Sisters, and their dedication in all that they are about, has touched us in ways that have led each of us to seek out a way of being associated with them. Led by the Spirit, the Sisters captured a way of inviting others to join them in the Associate relationship.

There is a rich history in the Church of such movements for the laity and the Vatican Council's focus on the universal call to holiness gives new impetus to this kind of relationship between religious congregations and the laity.

Today as Associates we have opportunities to share our faith in the on-going mission of Jesus to bring about the reign of God in our world. Sharing in the charism of the Sisters to "give joyful witness to love" we have many opportunities to grow spiritually, be part of a community and be of service to those who are living in poverty and in efforts to care for our common home.

In future months we will be sharing more about our lives as Associates ...

For those wishing to learn more about us go to our [Handbook and Associate Manual](#) both of which are available on the Sisters of Charity website.



Associates meeting—Assembly 2019



Sisters and Associates looking at old photographs from the Archives during breaks at Assembly 2019



Assembly of the Whole



Assembly of the Whole • Sisters of Charity Federation • June 13-16, 2019

Five hundred and fifty one Sisters, Associates, Archivists and Communicators, joined together in the mission of charity, met in Chicago IL for the first ever Assembly of the Whole. The photo above shows those who attended on behalf of the Sisters of Charity - Halifax. Those unable to attend were able to watch the Assembly via livestream. All materials and videos are available on the [Sisters of Charity Federation's website](#).





Assembly 2019

Over 130 Sisters and Associates gathered at the Doubletree by Hilton in Bedford, MA (August 22 - 26) with others joining via Zoom from Caritas Residence, Wellesley and their own homes. The photo above is the closing prayer song, "So Great a Love" by Carolyn McDade.

Sister Joan O'Keefe, Congregational Leader, convoked Chapter 2020, which will take place June 20 - 26, 2020 in Halifax, NS.



Sister Mary Lynn Flett helping Sister Ruth Anne Brighton download the Yapp app



Sisters Ruth Kline and Madeline Power participants at Caritas Residence



Sisters Patricia Murphy, Claire Theresa Dill, Blanche LaRose and Maureen Bernius participants at Wellesley



Massachusetts

Sisters Lillian Conroy, Barbara Toland and Barbara Gorham
Photo by Elena Miranda

Sister Elaine Butcher was one of five Sisters who attended the annual Nun Day at Fenway Park on June 26.

Elena Miranda is a former student and longtime friend of Sister Barbara Toland. She recently visited Sister Barbara at Mount Saint Vincent, Wellesley. A snippet of her experience:

“Over the years I have come to appreciate the special bond sisters share with those that “entered” at the same time and experienced their early years together; in this congregation, the group is called a “band.” The same is true of the sisters that entered the congregation from the same parish school. This weekend I saw how precious that bond truly is.

One of Sister Barbara’s fellow band members suffered a stroke in June; her name is also Sister Barbara. (I’ll call her Sister Barbara G.) Sister Barbara lives in the same complex as her friend, but Sister Barbara G. is in a separate residence for those with significant medical needs. She visits every evening to pray with her friend. She reads the evening prayer, the intercessions, and they sit quietly in the presence of God.”

[Read full blog post here](#)



Sister Maureen Bernius ballroom dancing at Wellesley
Photo by Elena Miranda



Elena Miranda with Sister Barbara Toland

WHO DO WE CHOOSE TO BE?

FACING REALITY
CLAIMING LEADERSHIP
RESTORING SANITY

MARGARET J. WHEATLEY
Bestselling author of *Leadership and the New Science*



Sister Betsy recommends

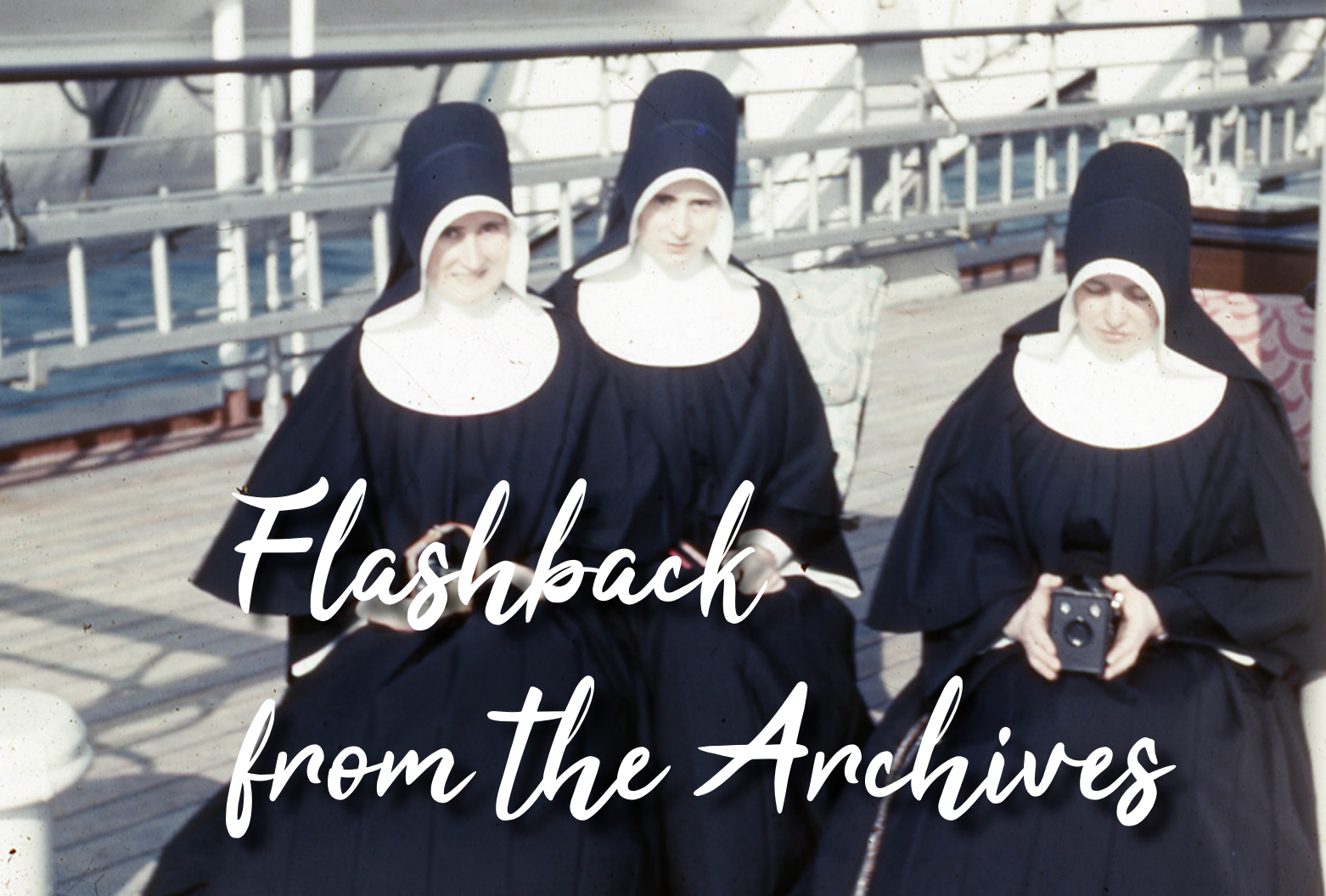
“Several years ago, in the face of irreversible global problems and the devolution of leadership, I began to challenge every leader I met with these questions: Who do you choose to be for this time? Are you willing to use whatever power and influence you have to create islands of sanity that evoke and rely on our best human qualities to create, relate, and persevere?” Margaret Wheatley

Sister Betsy Groome recommends *Who Do We Choose To Be?* because “[the author] points out how to recognize when something is collapsing.” In reading the book, Sister Betsy drew similarities to what Margaret Wheatley was saying and how it relates to the Sisters of Charity - Halifax as a Congregation. “The Congregation has changed since I entered,” she says. “The call is the same, but we’ve emerged in a whole new way and we need to own this new reality.”

The definition for Warriors for the Human Spirit are awake human beings who have chosen not to flee, they abide. “I believe the Sisters of Charity have what Margaret is talking about. You can identify Warriors by their cheerfulness, you will know them by their compassion.”

“We need leaders who recognize the harm being done to people and planet through the dominant practices that control, ignore, abuse, and oppress the human spirit.
We need leaders who put service over self,
stand steadfast in crises and failures, and
who display unshakable faith that
people can be generous, creative, and kind.”

Margaret Wheatley



Flashback from the Archives

1949

Three Sisters on the ship Parthia

Sisters Patricia Ann and Ann Patrice Bergin and an unidentified Sister on the Cunard Liner RMS Parthia in June 1949. During their summer breaks from teaching at Academy of the Assumption in Wellesley Hills, MA and St. Patrick's School in Lawrence, MA, the sisters traveled to the National University of Ireland to study.

Dominican Reunion



Sheila Nyhan (former member) visiting with Sisters Catherine McGowan and Jeanne Cottreau at Caritas Residence.

All three of these women lived and worked in the Dominican Republic when our Congregation had a ministry there (1969 - 2010).

Joyful Witness



WATER PROJECT El Salvador

Last spring, Sisters Maryanne Ruzzo and Cecilia Hudec traveled to El Salvador to visit the communities involved in our latest Water Project. In partnership with SHARE El Salvador, this project will bring clean, reliable water to families in the country's Chalatenango region. Sister Maryanne (4th from left) and Sister Cecilia (3rd from right) pose here with members of the local water committee, who showed them this completed water tank in a neighbouring community which serves as a model for their water project.

Watch for more details to come as the project progresses.

Charity Alive witnesses to the life and mission of the Sisters of Charity - Halifax, which is to make the love of God visible in today's world.

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